



RECEIVED TOWN CLERK
GRAFTON, MA

2021 MAY 24 PM 10:32

Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
30 Providence Road
Grafton, MA 01519

**Meeting Minutes
Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
April 15, 2021**

A meeting of the Grafton Affordable Housing Trust was held at 7:00 PM on April 15, 2021, via Zoom. In attendance were: Chair Bruce Spinney, Vice Chair and Treasurer Elisabeth Haynes, Clerk Dan Cusher, Ed Prisby, Eric Swenson, Curt Williams. Absent were: Dan Crossin. Guests in attendance were: None. Staff in attendance were: Chris McGoldrick (Town Planner).

1. Action Items

a. Consulting Agreement - Jenn Goldson

- Bruce spoke with Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) but Bruce said they're probably not going to be able to provide assistance that is 40B and Trust specific. Bruce also had more conversations about staff from the planning department paid for in part by the Trust, and it sounds like the Trust will likely get help with logistical type work and not the expertise that a consultant like Jenn Goldson can provide, so Bruce thinks the Trust should use also utilize a consultant on an "a la carte" basis when projects require such work.
- Bruce said would like to go out to bid for a consultant, but noted that there aren't a lot of consultants who have that expertise and an interest in working with the town side of affordable housing, as opposed to the developer side.
- Dan Cusher agreed that it's a good idea to start with. He said he would like to consider, after the Trust has been using this approach for a while, adding a part time or full time staff member with Jenn Goldson's level of expertise, so that they would be more focused than a consultant would be on finding new opportunities in Grafton.

b. Meeting Minutes

- **Dan Cusher moved to accept the minutes for the May 10, 2017, and March 18, 2021, meetings as presented. Eric Swenson seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call.**

c. Land Acquisition

- Hudson Avenue (53 Millbury Street)
 - Bruce gave an update. The Trust has looked into the Hudson Avenue property before but it "stalled out" and Bruce thinks the Trust should take another look at it. Bruce said Dan Cusher prepared a draft warrant article but some information was still needed, and asked Dan to give an update.

Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2021
Page 2

- Dan Cusher said he based the article on the previous Town Meeting warrant article that set the same land aside partly for the town cemetery and partly for the town dump. Dan said it referenced a plan called “Plan of Old Dump and Cemetery Land, Millbury Street, Grafton” dated May 1, 1957, and revised June 12, 1957, that was supposedly on file at the Town Clerk’s office, but when Dan asked the Clerk’s office for the plan they were unable to find it. Dan said this raises a question about how to determine where the land is divided for the cemetery and dump, and is uncertain how to resolve it. Dan asked if Chris or Bruce had any thoughts on how to resolve it.
- Bruce said the Board of Cemetery Commissioners didn’t have a copy of the plan when the Trust looked into this before. Bruce said he would reach out to the Board of Cemetery Commissioners through the Select Board, but at this point it probably wouldn’t be ready in time for the upcoming Town Meeting in June and would need to wait for fall Town Meeting. Bruce noted that while the Trust has the authority to propose warrant articles, he feels that this is something the Trust should partner with the Select Board on to get enough “momentum” and make a strong pitch on Town Meeting floor.
- Bruce asked if there was an informal agreement that the Trust would like to move forward with this for fall Town Meeting. There were no objections
- 60 Depot Street
 - Eric Swenson recused.
 - Bruce gave an update on the property. The parcel was taken by the Town for outstanding taxes in 2018 but it had been abandoned for decades before that. It doesn’t have any sewer capacity and Bruce doesn’t believe that there’s Town water there either. He sent to the Trustees as much correspondence as he could find on this parcel. Conservation Commission pointed out that the floodplain comes into the parcel which limits the ability to have a septic system, but Bruce thinks it can be done. Bruce thinks there won’t be room for many units as it’s a very small parcel, but it might be good for Habitat for Humanity. Bruce also noted that smaller projects like this tend to require a heavy investment from the Trust.
 - Bruce would like to talk to the Select Board first to get permission to do some additional work to determine if this is something the Trust wants to work on.

2. Discussion Items

a. 25 Worcester Street - Project Concept Updates and Review

- Bruce noted that the Trust received several items of correspondence that were included in the meeting materials and made publicly available. Bruce said the Trust would continue to encourage those who are participating in the process to do so, and have them more involved as the process moves forward. Bruce reiterated that the purpose of this meeting is just to bring Trustees up to speed on what can be done on

Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2021
Page 3

this site so that the Trust can make decisions on the Trust's behalf, and then it moves on to the other phases of the Local Initiative Program (LIP) process which include public hearings, zoning, comprehensive plan if it goes that way, Select Board, and others - all in public. Bruce assured attendees that he's acting on the suggestions he has received and will continue to incorporate those as meetings proceed.

- Concept D
 - The first concept was a 20 town house units. Bruce said they would likely be for sale but could also be done as rental.
 - Ed pointed out that there would only be 5 affordable units due to the 25% requirement for 40B, and Bruce said the Trust could possibly negotiate to get maybe seven affordable units, but that that would typically require the Trust to contribute something, though the Trust is already contributing the land which has a dollar value.
 - Elisabeth suggested, if only five units would be affordable, that the Trust consider simply doing five affordable units and no additional market rate units. Elisabeth said the Trust could use the Trust's money to fund that and get that money back once the units are sold. Bruce said that would still require a partnership and couldn't be done entirely with the Trust's funds, but that's an option that the Trust can look into. Bruce said it would need to be heavily subsidized and the Trust would not get its money back.
 - Dan Cusher pointed out that Grafton is 335 units away from the 10% Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) that Chapter 40B requires for a town to reject a comprehensive permit. Dan said he feels that the five affordable units this concept provides "doesn't really make a dent" in that gap, and to then take away the fifteen market rate units is a step in the wrong direction.
 - Elisabeth said she doesn't want to limit the total number of units in the town, but that for this particular site it might be better to do fewer units, all of which are affordable, and focus on "quantity more than quality" for future projects.
 - Ed pointed out that this is the only site the Trust has right now. Ed said he doesn't like the politics of talking about this site versus another one because it suggests that there's a better place to put affordable housing in someone else's neighborhood, when there will be the same reaction from those neighbors that there is another location better suited.
- Concept C
 - This concept has two three-storey, 20-unit buildings which would be rental units.
 - Dan Cusher said there are already a few three-storey, single-family homes on this stretch of Worcester Street, as well as the State Police Museum. Dan said he felt that, if the exterior were done to match the types of homes in the neighborhood,

Grafton Affordable Housing Trust
Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2021
Page 4

these buildings wouldn't look out of place. He said he would be interested in seeing a plan for three slightly smaller buildings of around 15 units each.

- Curt noted that Concept D included the square footage of each unit and asked if there was any information on that for this concept. Bruce said there wasn't.
 - **Concept B**
 - This concept is a hybrid with one three-storey, 20-unit apartment building and fifteen townhouses.
 - Bruce said there aren't a lot of developments like this but the Trust could phase it and split it up like this.
 - Ed pointed out that there would need to be 25% of the 20 rental units designated as affordable in order for all 20 to count toward the SHI, and then only the 25% of the for-sale townhouses would count toward the SHI. Bruce said he isn't entirely sure that's how they would be counted, and couldn't find a real application for this type of hybrid. Chris added that the calculation can get kind of complicated for developments like this but the affordable units need to be spread out throughout the entire development.
 - Dan Cusher said he feels like the Trust will either want to do the apartments or the townhouses, and doesn't see any upside to this concept. He said Concept B will give fewer total units than Concept C but that Concept B feels like a more "full" footprint. Bruce agreed that it's not a good usage of the space that's available.
 - **Concept A**
 - This is the same concept presented at the previous meeting, with three three-storey, 20-unit apartment buildings.
 - Bruce said he would request a few more concepts for the next meeting, including a single apartment building, some single-family houses, something that conforms with local zoning with a special permit, and some plans of the type that Habitat for Humanity might work on.
- 3. Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance of Meeting**
- a. **27 Upton Street**
- Chris and Bruce talked to GSX "in a very preliminary sense" about a possible role for the Trust in that project, with the main goal of increasing their affordable portion from the 10% required by the zoning to 25%, so that all of the rental units would count toward the SHI. Bruce is optimistic and thinks it would help the Trust to help GSX through the process for their Pine Street project
- 4. Adjournment**
- a. **Ed moved to adjourn. Dan Cusher seconded. Motion carried unanimously by roll call.**

Approved by the Affordable Housing Trust: May 20, 2021